**Argentina's Rulers Try To Solve Crisis By Increasing Attacks on Workers, Page 4**

**The Great Train Robbery: Thieving Bosses Use Two Sets of Books to Hike NYC Fare, Page 3**

# CHALLENGE

JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

May 14, 2003 Volume 38 #09 Suggested Donation $.50 www.plp.org

May 1st , the international working-class's day, occurs amid war, instability and violent attacks against the world's workers. The profit system has entered a new period of savagery. The recent slaughter in Iraq will lead to wider war for the conquest of Persian Gulf oil. Without this treasure, U.S. bosses cannot maintain their place as the world's dominant imperialist power.

Both "liberal" and "conservative" bosses share this strategic goal and are prepared to fight to the last drop of our blood to achieve it. Their international rivals cannot yet challenge them head-on, but are planning for the future. This is a period of war, police-state fascist repression and mounting economic misery. It is a period of increasing turmoil and tempo. History is moving faster. PLP says that despite appearances and regardless of obstacles, our class will win. The horrors of capitalism will not last forever. However long it takes, communist revolution is an achievable goal!

We are a Party of the working class. History and science teach us that only two forces in modern society are capable of holding political power. Today, power is in the hands of capitalists everywhere in the world. They use it against the workers and against each other to achieve maximum profit.

The other force is the working class. In 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ushered in the era of modern scientific communism with The Communist Manifesto. They proved in theory that communist revolution was inevitable. Over the next 125 years, billions of workers fought under the Red Flag for aspects of a communist future, confirming theory in rich, militant, practical experience. Highlights of this process include the Paris Commune of 1871, the Soviet Revolution of 1917, the Soviet defeat of the Nazis between 1941 and 1945, the Chinese Revolution of 1949, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the militant anti-imperialist uprisings of the 1960s in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

These great achievements turned into their opposite because of fatal political errors within the old communist movement. The PLP has analyzed these errors extensively in a number of strategic documents (Road to Revolution III and IV, among others). But the errors and defeats can-

*continued on page 2*

## U.S. 'Victory' in Iraq Intensifies Instability, War Worldwide

U.S. rulers had hoped that their massacre in Iraq would give them a hammerlock on its oil reserves and, thus, a huge advantage over their imperialist competitors. But although U.S. (and British) soldiers occupy the oilfields, Washington's control of the country is shaky at best. Anti-U.S. sentiment is running sky-high in Iraq and elsewhere, to the benefit of U.S. rivals. And while U.S. forces easily defeated Iraq's small, under-equipped army, the need to project force around the globe is stretching the U.S. military dangerously thin. The real fruits of Bush's victory are sharpening instability and armed conflict.

On April 22, over a million Shiites marched in Karbala turning a religious observance into a massive protest against U.S. occupation. Many came from Iran, with the blessing of the ayatollahs who had booted the U.S. oil bosses from that country in 1979. The London-based newspaper Al-Hayat (4/25/03) sees a developing power struggle between the U.S. and Iraq's Shiites. "This is because the Shiites — some 60% of the population — are the only indigenous force able to challenge the American military presence and, conversely, because the U.S. army in Iraq is the only force able to prevent a Shiite seizure of power.... The United States faces a formidable dilemma in Iraq. If it allows Shiite militancy to flourish unchecked it will, in effect, be handing power…to a Shiite Islamic revolution on the Iranian model. Yet if it seeks to repress the Shiites by direct military rule, it could find itself confronting a mass popular uprising with unpredictable consequences."

One consequence is already being debated in Washington's war rooms: a U.S invasion of Iran. Gen. James Woolsey of the Defense Policy Board is now engaged in World War IV against Iran and Syria, as well as Iraq (Time, 4/14/03). A U.S. campaign in Iran in forbidding terrain against forces fired by religious fervor would hardly be a cakewalk. Already the U.S. commanders have signed a "cease-fire" agreement with a group which for six years, right up until April 22, it has labeled terrorist, the People's Mujahadeen, which the U.S. bombed just three weeks before. Why? Because, says the New York Times (4/29), the "American military…already has its hands full trying to stabilize Baghdad and other areas of Iraq." But it also "raises questions about how consistently the Bush administration intends to apply a policy that had vowed to crack down on terrorist groups worldwide." The U.S. terror-

*continued on page 2*

# EDITORIAL | Revolution Only Answer to Imperialist War

*continued from front page*

not obscure the fundamental truth that the working class is capable of seizing and holding political power. This is the most important lesson for us as the present period of war, fascism and general oppression sharpens. Our goal is the seizure of political power and the establishment of a workers' dictatorship over all bosses.

Capitalism will always require an industrial working class — which also produces all of U.S. imperialism's armaments — and therefore these industrial workers must remain the crucial strategic focus for revolutionary organizing. The class struggle never ceases. Today, the bosses have the upper hand. They're able to get away with murder, both in Iraq and against steelworkers. But sooner or later, workers will begin to fight back. The massive anti-war protests of recent months are a sure sign that mass passivity will not last forever in the face of war and fascism.

Everything we do now to carry out our revolutionary line will bear fruit later, when the working class flexes its muscles once again. Lenin was right; imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism. It has blanketed the globe and has nowhere left to go, except constant wars to re-divide markets and control over exploited workers. If we have confidence in the working class and our Party, if we have confidence in the process of change, we can put millions of workers and youth on the road to revolution. In particular this means deepening our influence on the job, in the military. and in the mass movement, sharpening the class struggle and creating a mass base of readers and distributors for CHALLENGE.

We continue to hold high the Red Flag of communist revolution. We continue to fight to become a Party of the working class. The long, difficult period ahead must not deter us. If not revolution in our lifetime, than a lifetime of revolution. Making a lifetime commitment to serve the working class remains the best choice anyone can make. Join and build the Progressive Labor Party.✪

## *Industrial Workers Still Key Force in Society*

In the last generation, a lot of nonsense has been written about the working class. Today, one can read a good deal in the bosses' press about the transformation of the U.S. into a "service" economy. While the service sector has expanded, the industrial working class remains the key force in society.

Between 1983 and 2001, the work force grew from 100,834,000 to 135,073,000. The percentage of production workers, including transportation, communication, and technicians, fell from 31.6% to 28.9%, but the absolute number of production workers increased by over 7 million, from 31.8 million to more than 39 million.

Despite technological advances and moves to overseas sources of cheap labor that reduced employment in manufacturing, 18,970,000 workers still held manufacturing jobs in 2001. In construction and communications, employment increased by roughly 50%.

More than 30 years ago, our Party identified black workers as a "key force for revolution." Between 1981 and 2001, the percentage of black and Hispanic workers in production jobs increased from slightly over one-fifth to one-third.

One big trend has been the creation of a non-union "labor aristocracy" in high tech. This is clearly an obstacle to revolutionary organizing, and we must take it seriously into account. Meanwhile, a general consolidation of industry is targeting the better-paid workers of old. A case in point is the planned takeover of Bethlehem Steel by the newly formed International Steel Group (ISG). Tens of thousands of current workers will suffer pay cuts. Many retirees will lose benefits.

The architect of this attack is ISG boss Wilbur Ross, a liberal, who ranks among the Democratic Party's top donors in New York. Ross's Bethlehem buyout squares with West Virginia's Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller's "Stand Up for Steel" program. In preparing for the near future, they will need to extend their military adventures in the Persian Gulf. For the longer-range future, they will need to make war on far more powerful rivals than Iraq or even Iran. Therefore, the liberal rulers want to ensure the survival of the strategic steel industry in the U.S. Pushing formerly well-paid steelworkers into poverty is part of the plan. Similar trends are occurring in all key industries, particularly those related to the military.✪

## *'Victory' Leading to More War*

*continued from front page*

ists hope to use this group in any future fight with Iran.

Nor is it a sure thing that the victorious coalition's oil giants, Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, BP and Shell will get immediate and complete access to Iraq's vast oil reserves. That was the stated goal of Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi, whom War Secy. Rumsfeld wants to make puppet ruler of Iraq. But Chalabi, who spent the last four decades living it up in London, has very little popular support. And Iraq's oil bureaucracy, which the U.S. spared in the war — needing Iraqi know-how and manpower — naturally opposes Exxon, Chalabi, & Co. In addition France and Russia are exploiting popular opposition to the U.S. occupation to try to ensure continuing UN management of Iraqi oil sales, which the UN now sends through French and Russian brokers. The latter could probably wind up at least as junior partners to the U.S. in pumping Iraqi oil.

Keeping 130,000 troops in Iraq to secure the oilfields weakens U.S. rulers militarily as well as among world opinion. Sen. John McCain complained that demands on troops during the Iraq war rendered the U.S. powerless to face down North Korea. "One of the chief problems, he said, is that the United States does not have sufficient active duty personnel. He said the Armed Forces cannot continue to activate reservists at the same rate and expect people to remain in the service. 'Any lingering credibility that America has the capability to fight two wars on two fronts at one time should be laid to rest. We simply don't have it. That's why the North Korean situation was put on the back burner.'" (Associated Press, 4/26) McCain was hinting at restoring the draft. But as the wave of mutinies and rebellions by U.S. troops in the Vietnam War showed, a draft will create even more problems for the rulers.

The war in Iraq was in many ways a setback for U.S. bosses. At the same time thousands of working-class Iraqi soldiers and civilians died. Working-class GIs were turned into the tools of racist butchery. But the war revealed to many that capitalists value oil profits over human life. Workers must use the anti-capitalist feeling the war sparked to build a movement that will eventually eliminate the profit system.✪

## 'Liberation' Bush Style = Massacre

Iraqi workers and students are finding out what Bush, Rumsfeld and Colin Powell mean when they talk about "liberation" and "democracy." On April 28, invading U.S. troops murdered 15 Iraqi citizens and wounded 70 outside a school in Falluja, 40 miles west of Baghdad. About 200 students and their parents were demonstrating and chanting "Down USA!" while demanding U.S. forces quartered there leave so the children could return to classes. Musana Saleh abdel Latif, 41, lying in a hospital with his right foot amputated, when told the U.S. claimed troops were responding to being fired on, charged, "They are lying. They're ready to shoot for any reason. They're criminals." (The Guardian, 4/30)

On April 30, U.S. troops killed two more Iraqis and wounded another 14 when they shot into a crowd of 1,000 marching down Falluja's main street protesting the April 28th slayings. All told the U.S. invaders have killed at least 30 Iraqi civilians in the past two weeks, including 10 in Mosul and three others in Falluja on the same day as the April 28 massacre.

The town's Iraqi police inspector told The Guardian there was no reason for U.S. troops to be in Falluja. The people had chosen a new mayor, the imans in the mosque had stopped the looting and got some of the stolen goods returned. "We controlled the town," he said. "When the troops came eight days ago, they said they would stay for two or three days, but they're still here and the numbers have been increasing."

Ahmed Hussein, at the hospital bedside of his 18-year-old son, shot in the stomach and expected to die, expressed a common sentiment in telling the New York Times (4/30), "Either they leave Falluja or we will make them leave."✪

## *WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:*

**✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.**

**✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

**✪Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.**

**✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

**✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.**

**✪Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.**

**✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.**

***JOIN US!***

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

**CHALLENGE PERIODICALS**
**PO Box 808**
**BROOKLYN, NY 11202**
**www.plp.org**
**email:**
**cd188@juno.com**
**718 630 9440**

*CHALLENGE/DESAFIO* (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue $.50. Subscription: $15. Six months: $10. Send address changes to *CHALLENGE* Periodicals, GPO 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202. May 14, 2003 Volume 38, No.09

***The Great Subway Heist:***

# NYC Bosses Use 'Deficit' Scam to Hike Fare

**NEW YORK CITY, April 24 —**Fraud piled on top of fraud — that's the continuing story of the robbery of this city's workers who ride, and work on, the subways and buses operated by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA). Claiming a budget deficit of a billion dollars, the MTA jacked up fares 33%, from $1.50 to $2.00, effective May 4. This is a racist attack since this increase falls most heavily on black, Latin and Asian workers who comprise 61% of the riders.

Last fall, the transit bosses said there was "no problem" and Gov. Pataki never mentioned a fare increase or "deficit" during his election campaign. Then in January, the MTA announced a $2.8 billion budget gap. Overnight that "gap" plummeted to $1 billion on which they still were able to justify that 33% fare increase.

Now it turns out the MTA was operating with two sets of books. The public set claimed a huge "deficit," while their "private" books showed more than a half billion dollar SURPLUS for 2002. Then they transferred that money to the 2004 budget, leaving 2003 with a deficit requiring a fare hike. "Now you see it, now you don't." (One source reported that by shifting the surplus to 2004, the rulers avoided enacting a fare increase in an election year.)

The real estate interests, the big department stores and the Wall St. financial district couldn't make a dime's worth of profit without a mass transit system bringing millions of workers and shoppers to the city. If these profiteers paid for this system through a transit tax, there would be no "deficit." There should be no transit fare at all, just as you don't pay every time the Sanitation Dept. picks up your garbage or the Fire Dept. puts out a fire.

And what's the reaction of the transit union to all this flim-flam? Union president Toussaint and the TWU leadership hardly lifted a finger when nearly 200 token booth clerks' jobs disappeared down the drain. They allowed the MTA to continue the Giuliani Workfare program, failing to organize the 500 welfare recipients who replaced 500 union subway cleaners at slave labor "wages." And they hugged the MTA chief at the close of negotiations, rather than expose the bankers' robbery of the transit system through their collection of billions in interest.

The rulers established the Transit Authority in 1948 to play this exploitative role and provide a source of billions in profits for the banks. Capitalism has all sorts of gimmicks to pick the workers' pockets. That's why all workers should join the PLP to organize to destroy this blood-sucking system.✪

# Airlines' Give and Take: Unions Give, Bosses Take; Workers' Unity Needed

The current crisis in the airline industry shows that in such times the unions' role is to deliver the workers to their exploiters. The entire industry is either in, or threatening, bankruptcy, mainly to void their union contracts. Since 9/11, over 100,000 jobs and billions in wages and benefits have been lost, with no end in sight.

The current crisis dwarfs Reagan's firing of thousands of air traffic controllers during the 1981 PATCO strike. The AFL-CIO's passivity in the face of that attack opened the door to two decades of union-busting and strike-breaking. Then, as now, the AFL-CIO leadership is worse than useless.

On April 25, American Airlines (AMR) workers surrendered $1.62 billions in give-backs. AMR bosses threatened to eliminate employee pensions by declaring bankruptcy if the workers didn't agree to these give-backs, while the top five executives voted themselves million-dollar bonuses and a special trust fund to guarantee the obscene pensions of the top 45 bosses.

In the past, when bankruptcy threatened, executives had to "get in line" behind other creditors to collect any retirement money. Now, through "secured trusts," these big shots own the pension funds, no matter what happens. The pensions of 70,000 Motorola workers are under-funded by $1.4 billion while the company socked away $38 million into a special pension trust for the top executives.

## UNION FLIP-FLOPS

AMR workers were furious and, bowing to an outcry from the rank and file, union leaders refused to sign the concessionary contracts. "Good for them!" said one Boeing inspector. "Somebody had to put an end to this management arrogance." But the union leaders then reversed themselves and agreed to the give-backs after American CEO Donald Carty resigned.

To add insult to injury, the New York Times (4/26) ran an article claiming the "unions have been taking such a pounding … because they have been so successful." By that logic, if we worked for nothing, we wouldn't have to give concessions!

"Will [airline] worker wage cuts become a model for other companies?" asks this same article. "The airline unions, like the steel and auto workers, are far weaker….But like the others, the airline unions hope to avoid the scrap heap by cooperating with employers, perhaps by granting concessions…"

We saw this cooperation at our last union meeting when we were told to lobby our state legislators to do "Whatever It Takes" to get Boeing to build its new jet plane in Washington State. What will it take? Boeing wants state college tuition increases to be free of any limitations imposed by state government. They also want a freeze on unemployment benefits. Attack our kids and the 35,000 laid-off Boeing workers!

We must reject the rules and laws of capitalism and set our sights on a communist alternative. Our class will not spontaneously learn this lesson, no matter how hard things get. Only resolute work by our Party over a long period will drive this home for the vast majority of our class. This means increasing the sale of CHALLENGE, patient long-term building of ties with workers and initiating class struggle, from within the union if possible, or outside it if necessary. We can't let the unions' capitulation hold us back.

We should do "Whatever it takes" to support the airline workers' fight against concessions: flyers, picket lines, demonstrations and ultimately a general strike in aerospace. Initiating class struggle, prepared for with increased CHALLENGE sales and personal ties, can open the door for more recruitment to PLP. "Whatever It Takes" to pave the road to revolution!✪

# LA Garment Workers Take to PLP's Ideas, May Day

**LOS ANGELES, April 29 —** At 7 a.m. on any given day, hundreds of garment workers take a PL leaflet, fold it into their pockets to look at later. Others read it on the spot, wanting to know PLP's ideas on the war and on the solution to problems in the garment shops. This scene is repeated in various parts of the city.

In several garment factories, workers discuss how to celebrate May Day, the international workers' day. In one shop, over 100 workers say they'll participate. Many give $3 to buy food and celebrate May Day with a dinner and a speech inside the factory.

Preparations for the May 3rd March through leaflets, CHALLENGES, study groups and lunch-time discussions in the factories have brought PLP's message of the fight against exploitation and for workers' power to thousands. The leaflets describe the war in Iraq as a racist attack against workers worldwide. They've also read about the need to organize the working class to destroy this murderous system and build a new communist society based on meeting the needs of the international working class.

We've explained that the U.S. ruling class — preparing for its imperialist wars — attacks workers here as well as in Iraq. Among the most affected are LA County's 150,000 garment workers. Federal and state budget cuts took away billions of dollars from hospitals, clinics and schools, resulting in their closing and layoffs of thousands, all to pay for the bosses' murderous war for profit. The garment bosses provide no medical insurance, much less decent wages to pay for private doctors or schools.

Meanwhile, the MTA (Metropolitan Transit Authority) is planning a $10 monthly fare hike, with no transfers or tokens. This attacks more than one million bus riders, including garment workers. The MTA's war contract also cuts bus drivers' and mechanics' benefits and wages while increasing harassment. Unity of garment workers and all others who ride mass transit with MTA workers is crucial to the fight against the bosses' assaults and war budget.

PLP can organize these workers into class struggle against the bosses while building ties with workers and their families. Although there may be much fear of the bosses' repression, workers' hatred of them is growing, forming a basis for growth of the revolutionary communist movement.✪

## *Saddam, U.S. Imperialists, Fundamentalists OUT:*

# *Iraqi Workers Need Communist Revolution*

The Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld gang claims to have liberated the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein but their goal is imperialist conquest. However, we shed no tears for Saddam and his fascist butchers, many of whom abandoned their troops after being bought off by the Pentagon. Over 300,000 Iraqis died in his eight-year war against Iran and 100,000 more perished when he invaded Kuwait. Bush is not the only one who makes war for oil! Saddam cynically used 500,000 Iraqi deaths from U.S.-imposed sanctions as a cover to maintain his regime and luxury. Just as he served U.S. rulers before and during the Iraq-Iran war, now he gave French and Russian oil companies good deals to try to use them as protection against a U.S. invasion.

It's no surprise that angry Iraqi workers stripped clean the palaces, government ministries and stores owned by the ruling class. While workers were dying from lack of medical care, the hospital treating the elite was as good as any treating U.S. bosses. Saddam built 19 new palaces, stuffed with fancy furniture. In one, he had hundreds of millions in $100 bills stored in boxes, more than Iraq spent on medicines in two years.

Arab nationalists like the Emir of Qatar who owns al-Jazeera, shed crocodile tears about those slaughtered in the U.S. invasion. But they never said a word about the thousands Saddam tortured every year, or the 100,000 Kurds he gassed or shot. These Arab dictators don't care about dead Iraqi workers. They want to oppress Arab workers, and keep U.S. imperialism out!

Some new oppressor will replace Saddam. There is vigorous competition among the various capitalist factions. The U.S. stooges are mostly the old pre-Saddam ruling class. For instance, Ahmed Chalabi, Rumsfeld's favorite and head of the Iraqi National Congress, also heads one of the richest old Iraqi families. His father and grandfather were both cabinet ministers under the monarchy, which was overthrown in 1958. The family is as well known in Iraq as the Rockefellers in the U.S. So Chalabi draws support from those who want a return to the monarchy's pro-Western, free market capitalism.

The Muslim clerics would install a vicious religious fascism like in Iran. There are several prominent families — operating like Mafia families — with power passing from one generation to another. The most powerful is the al-Sadrs. The young family head, Moqtadah al-Sadr, with very little religious training, had the chief of the pro-American family, Abdelmajid Khoei, assassinated in the holiest mosque. Then this thug's goons surrounded the house of the most respected elderly cleric, Ayatollah al-Sistani, demanding he leave the country. Al-Sadr is working fist-in-glove with the Iranian fascist clerical regime against U.S. rulers. The Iranians have provided him millions in cash and hundreds of militants.

Another of the big clerical families, the Hakims, is also in Iran's pocket. Tehran-based Ayatollah Bakr al-Hakim heads the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. The U.S. has hopes of working with this group, but Iran seems to be putting more emphasis on al-Sadr's militant anti-U.S. camp.

The pseudo left-sounding pan-Arab nationalists want to restore Baath rule without Saddam, as in Syria. They attack U.S. imperialism's plan to plunder Iraq's oil wealth, but neglect to mention their own plans to grab that wealth for themselves. They attack the clerics who would bar women from public life and discriminate against the million non-Muslims, but they plan to perpetuate the racist system which, for several hundred years, has kept power in the hands of the elite claiming to represent the 20% of the Iraqi population who are Arab Sunnis. These pan-Arab nationalists have strong support from Syria, with quiet support from most of the other Arab rulers.

Actually, many Iraqi workers have a long history of support for communists in Iraq, through the Iraqi Communist Party which led the oil workers and organized general strikes that helped topple the monarchy there. They might have led a worker seizure of power had they not fallen victim to reformism, to supporting the "lesser evil" capitalists.

### The Role a Revolutionary Working Class Can Play

The working class is not impotent. The vacuum created with Saddam's fall would have been an excellent opportunity for a communist-led working class to fight the imperialist invaders, overthrow all the bosses and install a revolutionary dictatorship of the workers. But without a revolutionary communist party with a mass base among the workers, the masses in Iraq will remain under the brutal heel of one capitalist or another.

Our job is to build a strong international revolutionary communist PLP. Building a mass PLP in the U.S., especially among Iraqi and Arab immigrants can help build a sister party in Iraq and the Middle East. Building a communist base among U.S. soldiers can also help. The nationalists and the clerics are no better than the U.S. stooges. The millions marching against war should realize that marching is not enough. They must be won to reject all the warmakers and fascist killers and fight to overthrow all the bosses with communist revolution.✪

# Argentina's Bosses Try to Solve Crisis By Attacking Workers Who Seized Plant

**BUENOS AIRES, April 28 —**The ruling class here is doing everything it can to "solve its crisis and return to "normal" capitalist exploitation. Yesterday's presidential election produced a runoff between the two leading candidates for the first time in Argentina's history. Former President Carlos Menem (under house arrest for thievery not too long ago) will oppose Nestor Kichner, governor of an oil-producing province. and ally of the pro-European imperialists current interim President, Duhalde.

In something not seen anywhere in the capitalist world, two candidates from the same Party are running in a Presidential election. Menem represents a more pro-U.S. faction of the Justicialista (Peronista) Party. Menem, was responsible for the country's bankruptcy during his presidency in the 1990s. He privatized everything. He's campaigning to use the army to quell mass protests.

All the Peronistas have a long history of oppressing the working class. Although, Gen. Peron, an admirer of Mussolini and Hitler, took power during World War II with workers' support, his government and the movement which he founded were and are deadly enemies of workers.

On Dec. 18-19, 2001, la Casa Rosada, the Presidential palace here was surrounded by tens of thousands of angry demonstrators, causing President de la Rua to flee. This mass uprising grew out of the economy's total collapse. The Peronistas filled the political vacuum and seized the government, to protect capitalism.

### Women Workers Lead Factory Seizure; Attacked By Bosses' Cops

During this uprising, workers seized factories abandoned by their bosses. The Brukman garment plant was one such plant. Since the mid-1990s, these workers had suffered increasing exploitation, being paid irregularly, denied paid vacations, bonuses and other benefits. Finally, amid the December uprising, Brukman union delegates went to see the bosses about missing wages, but they had fled. At first the workers thought the bosses had gone to get the money, but they didn't return, so the workers took over the plant. The bosses then offered some back wages, but workers demanded all that was due them. They realized the bosses wanted to trick them, to vacate the plant and then move everything out.

With the December mass uprising occurring simultaneously, some workers feared the cops would attack. One worker, "Juanita," stood in the gate and said, "No one is leaving." A few left but most stayed. They learned how to live from the solidarity of others, raising money from fellow workers. Some were very worried about the lack of money and food. Neighbors nearby placed a box in the street and people left all kinds of food.

The struggle inside the plant sharpened. Some workers believed the bosses' promises and left. Those inside began to operate the plant themselves. When the police tried to evict them, neighbors appeared and confronted them. The cops waded in, even clubbing a 5-year-girl. But when hundreds came to support the workers, the cops retreated. The mass mobilizations and such struggles continued for a few months after the December uprising.

After many useless dealings with government bureaucracies, and many debates and discussions, the workers decided to run the plant by themselves.

This attack emboldened the workers. After many useless dealings with government bureaucracies, and many debates and discussions, the workers decided to run the plant by themselves. Much support followed, particularly from university students. The workers organized everything, bought and sold merchandise and paid themselves decent wages.

This lasted until last month, when two judges (appointed during the military dictatorship of the mid 1970s) ordered the eviction of the workers. Brunkman wanted his plant back. The cops came at night and threw out the few workers in the place.

A few days later, 25,000 people led by workers from Brukman marched to the plant. Celia Martinez, a Brukman worker, said: "Brukman abandoned us when all we knew was to sew. Now we know how to operate the plant. We know how much a suit costs. We learned it's not that difficult to manage a plant. And that, it seems, make us very dangerous people."

A few days before that, the cops tried to evict workers occupying the Zanon Ceramics plant in Neuquen province. The presidential elections are part and parcel of this "counter-revolution."

But Argentina's working class and its allies have learned they can run factories without bosses. They're also learning this can't happen under capitalism; soon the bosses, their judges, cops and courts take them back. They're also learning that the union hacks, who support one brand or another of Peronism, are not on their side. The bosses are gearing up for more violent attacks to erase these lessons. Building a revolutionary mass party to turn these struggles into schools for communism now becomes a matter of life and death.✪

# Rulers' 'War At Home' Dumps 400 Brooklyn Workers on the Street

**BROOKLYN, NY, April 22 —**About 2.4 million jobs have disappeared in the last two years while the Bush gang spends tens of billions to kill Iraqi workers and uses tax cuts to swell the pockets of the rich. Then we read about the war on workers here destroying the lives of the workers who comprise those statistics.

Nearly 400 workers at AM Cosmetics will be thrown out on the street on May 30. New owners bought the factory from Lawrence Bathgate, a former finance chairman of the Republican National Committee, who installed former Bush, Sr., cabinet member Jack Kemp, as a "trophy" director. Bathgate & Co. bought the business from AM's founder, a lunch buddy of ex-Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

It was this cast of characters that has dumped workers like Ana Gutierrez, a 61-year old grandmother, from an assembly line job that "has been my life for 20 years and now nothing. I have to get another job. But who's going to hire someone my age?"

The United Food & Commercial Workers neglected to sign a severance pay agreement into its contract, so any worker with under five years gets nothing, while those with more than five years will get one to two weeks pay. That puts Jimmy Wright, 53, with seven years at AM, "little more than a paycheck away from homeless." (NY Daily News, 4/21)

When the Bathgate crew bought AM in 1996, they bought out rival companies left and right, amassing a $230 million debt while paying themselves huge salaries and bonuses and flying around in private jets. "They bought so many companies at the same time," says Elijio Abreu, 38, a 13-year veteran and a union steward, that "at the end they didn't have enough money to pay for supplies." Finally, in June 1998 they defaulted on a $6 million loan payment, and the bank creditors moved in. The company was put on the market and sold in March to Markwins International for $32 million. Markwins is closing the Brooklyn plant and another one in North Arlington, NJ and shipping the jobs to China where they can pay workers $2 a day.

*Markwins workers locked out of work.*

So now these 400 workers, many of them single mothers, will become new "recruits" in the vast "reserve army of the unemployed." The bosses, their politicians and their union leader/lieutenants all represent a profit system that must create this mass joblessness. Those are the ones the working class must "lay off," six feet under.✪

## WAR SPARKS DEBATE AND OPPOSITION AMONG GI'S

Being in the army has its advantages. The most important advantage is to have first hand interaction with soldiers. Back at home there was limited talk about politics. Everyone would sit around and either ignore politics or not mention much at all. Now, on the base where I'm stationed, everywhere I go, someone is having a political conversation. Things have changed dramatically. Two soldiers are well known to be against the war. They're called trouble makers who go around starting conversations and sparking debates. Both these soldiers are so convincing that some will refuse to argue with them because they make a strong case, with strong feelings. When they say its about oil, others have a hard time proving them wrong, and many agree.

One day as I walked through the barracks I decided to visit a soldier who had his door open. I didn't know him, and even though I 'd seen him around, we had barely talked. He turned out to be very friendly and invited me in. To my surprise, this soldier is from my home city. After a while, our conversation turned to current events. The main thing in the minds of soldiers now is war. He correctly identified the US as an imperialist country that is trying to maintain its power around the world by its invasion of Iraq. This is a very quiet guy—someone who I least expected to have such strong opinions.

Given the two guys who are very outspoken and my new friend's opinions, I believe that many soldiers feel the same way. Being in touch with the party helps me inform myself and my fellow soldiers. I plan to maintain these relationships and further their understanding of the murderous capitalist system. The soldiers who decide to be outspoken and have a mind of their own are considered trouble makers of the company but in the future they can help many to become the revolution makers.

*A Comrade*

## Fight Military Recruiters At UMASS

**BOSTON, April 3 —** Military recruiters had a bad day today at the University of Massachusetts. Students were shouting at them, with one wearing a T-shirt stating, "Education not Enlistment — Military Recruiters off My Campus!" Some students blocked their table while distributing leaflets commemorating the assassination of Martin Luther King. One recruiter said the students should be "shot in the head" for their views.

A professor of Africana Studies, defending the students, got into a shouting match with one recruiter. Then campus cops, acting on the racist assumption that the black person caused the confrontation, tackled the professor to the ground, ripped his jacket, shackled his ankles and brought him to the local courthouse for arraignment.

This racist incident reflects a broader struggle of workers and students on the UMASS campus against the increasing police and military presence. It has broadened the ranks of the campus anti-war group and increased its militancy. The recruiters have canceled their next visit and a legal team is fighting for their temporary removal. Teach-ins, rallies and informational sessions are all being planned to expose the role of the military on campus. The first action will be against an FBI recruiter on campus.

A contradiction exists within the campus anti-war coalition reflecting one within the entire movement, a struggle between those advocating a more militant, anti-imperialist position and the leadership which tries to narrow the struggle with a watered-down message limiting militancy and serving the liberal rulers. Here the campus group hesitates to take a formal stand against the military recruiters for fear of "isolation."

PLP'ers strive to point out the basis for imperialist war is capitalism and the drive by all bosses for maximum profits. The spread of CHALLENGE plays an important role in this fight.✪

## Academic/Students Conference Must Unite With, Not Just Study Workers

PL will have a strong presence at the Sixth Biennial Working-Class Conference in Youngtown, Ohio, May 14-17. The conference will include mainly students and academics. There will be about 150 presentations on the theme, "Intersections with Race, Gender and Sexuality."

PLP will champion the idea that the time is now for the working class and those professors teaching Working-Class Studies to attack the U.S. imperialist war that is attempting to convert working-class people into fascist killers. No one on the program is scheduled to speak on that topic. In fact, academics who study the working class almost always divorce their work from capitalism's sharpest contradictions. Few, if any, have paid attention to the recent maneuverings by the United Auto Workers in Michigan who passed resolutions opposing the war in Iraq. As CHALLENGE pointed out (4/2/03), the resolutions are against Bush, not imperialism.

Likewise, construction workers clearing the World Trade Center site have been used by the ruling class as patriotic pigeons, waving flags for television cameras and "supporting" the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq.

In contrast, CHALLENGE readers should recognize that the largely working-class U.S. military is being used by the ruling class both to carry out its international war for oil and to deflect attention from the massive ranks of unemployed, now close to 12% (including those who have given up looking for jobs but are usually not counted). Meanwhile a Shell oil executive will oversee the "transition" of the Iraqi oil industry while American Airline workers suffer huge pay-cuts and give-backs in order to help the bosses avoid "bankruptcy."

This conference can point out these contradictions and rally participants against U.S. imperialism's war to protect profits, and the blood shed for oil by the world's workers. The point is not to study the working class, but to build a worker-student alliance to move the working-class movement forward.✪

## D.C. Janitors Get $32 A Day; Pentagon Spends A Billion Per Day

**WASHINGTON, D.C., April 29 —** Janitors cleaning offices of some of the wealthiest organizations in the nation's capital, including the American Medical Association, are paid $32 a day, with no benefits. Meanwhile, barely a stone's throw away stands the Pentagon, spending more than ONE BILLION DOLLARS A DAY. The U.S. rulers' war budget aimed at control of Middle Eastern oil spends more in ONE SECOND than these exploited janitors are paid in ONE YEAR!

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) has launched a Justice For Janitors campaign to organize these workers. But based on past experience, the janitors should be wary of the SEIU. They have sabotaged more workers in Los Angeles, Pittsburgh and elsewhere than they have helped.

The janitors were scheduled to demonstrate for their demands on May 1st, the day of international solidarity for the working class worldwide. In the spirit of this year's May Day, workers everywhere should express our support for these janitors' struggle for a decent wage and benefits. But we should also note that this kind of exploitation has existed throughout the history of capitalism and can only be ended when this profit system is destroyed.✪

# LETTERS

"Fight for communism under all circumstances, but with wisdom."
*Red Prayer Group*

## Don't Rely on Union Hacks

I've read CHALLENGE off and on for many years but recently I've become a regular reader and find myself in increasing sympathy with PL's positions, which represent a real communist alternative to capitalist exploitation, racism and war. PL particularly impresses me because it avoids the reformism and opportunism of other groups or tendencies which pretend to be "communist."

Therefore, I was a little dismayed to read in the April 30 CHALLENGE a reformist view on trade unions in capitalist society. In the article, "Liberal Oakland Mayor Orders Cops' Attack on Anti-war Protestors," the author writes:

"One key weakness was the lack of involvement of ILWU workers. The union leadership should have organized to put members on the picket lines to shut the entire port. Had the workers come out, the cops could have been defeated."

I certainly agree that the absence of the ILWU workers was a real weakness. However, the author makes a big error when saying "the union leadership should have put members on the picket lines to shut the entire port." Should have? It's impossible that the ILWU bureaucrats — or any trade union in capitalist society for that matter — would dare to really launch a fight against the fascist state and its cops. Positing such a possibility can only sow illusions among workers that the union tops can be "pressured" to "do the right thing," or that they can be replaced with a different, more "militant" union leadership which will "really" fight for the workers' interests. This is the sort of opportunism that Trotskyites push.

PL put it very well in the January 1998 issue of The Communist: "Defeat Right Opportunism — Open the Door to Revolution," where it says, "...PL correctly views unions as the bosses' tool. They will never act in the workers' class interests. Even if they increase their militancy and force some minor concessions for their members, the result can only reinforce their reformist grip on workers." I hope this is PLP's firm position on the unions, because it's the communist position.

The ILWU workers could only have come out against the war and in defense of the anti-war demonstrators in a wildcat action (against the union bureaucrats as much as against the cops). Such actions require a communist PLP in workplaces, fighting to build workers' power through the Party rather than through a more "militant" union leadership.

*A Boston reader*

**SUBSCRIBE TO:**

**CHALLENGE**

Send $15 to
CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
PO BOX 808
BROOKLYN,NY 11202
OR VISIT www.plp.org

## Preaching Anti-War, Anti-Racist Ideas

Over the years we've been active members and leaders in a church with moderate to conservative middle-class members. We have about a dozen regular CHALLENGE readers and head up a group that took the lead in opposing the U.S. racist-imperialist attack on Iraq. We participated in many demonstrations, including one of our own last November. We've distributed leaflets, held vigils and forums, and actively fought anti-Arab racism, including supporting a woman arrested last year because of racial profiling.

Our most important struggle resulted in passing a resolution against the war, after it had started. Regular CHALLENGE readers who meet with our PLP study group took the lead. Although it was a weak resolution — liberals called for "supporting the troops" — still it was one of those "little things" that count. Of 48 people at the meeting, 99% voted for it, enabling us to put out literature in the church's name.

At a convention with about 120 people representing churches throughout our region, young people led a workshop on racism. We opposed the idea that whites were basically racist, and that "until they deal with their racism" there's no basis for multi-racial unity. Some were won to uniting to fight racism, especially within ourselves. I explained how to build multi-racial unity in all-white churches.

At the plenary session we presented a resolution — for debate and discussion only —- that our churches should become anti-imperialist, just as we're anti-racist and anti-sexist. We said the moment the American flag is raised over Iraq, the U.S. will become a new Roman Empire. We called for a resolution opposing imperialism to be voted on at our next convention.

At the president's suggestion, we advanced it as a motion, which carried with only three votes opposed. Six people agreed to serve on a committee to work on this anti-imperialist resolution. The Black Panthers had a slogan: "Seize the Time." Much of what our Party is advocating these days is right in that spirit.

Unfortunately, I underestimated the interest in our ideas and had no Party literature to distribute. A deacon and his wife, both leaders in a small, black, working-class church, are regular CHALLENGE readers, who always give a couple of dollars each issue from their small retirement income. Our deep ties with them and their friendship and faith in us is very sustaining in these times of depression, fascism and war. We want to win them to come to our May Day celebration.

Fight for communism under all circumstances, but with wisdom.

*Red Prayer Group*

## ESL Classes Learn About Revolution

I teach two classes of English as a Second Language, Level 2, to members of a large union. These mostly immigrant women workers are facing the budget axe. The State is slashing $1 billion in services, closing agencies and cutting jobs, all of which will severely affect the clients — elderly workers who will face severe hardships and/or be dumped into understaffed nursing homes.

Recently union members attended a large rally protesting these cuts. To prepare for this rally we used articles from newspapers and the union newsletter. We picked up new words in English like "givebacks" and "corporate loopholes." I used information from CHALLENGE about the huge interest the City and State pay to the banks on borrowed money. There's a "loophole" the official press and the union don't talk about!

We've been discussing the imperialist war on Iraq for oil periodically since last September. All my students immediately connected the enormous costs of the invasion and occupation of Iraq to the economic attacks on workers here. We told our union rep to make this link at the rally. Everyone later noted that didn't happen.

In the course of the year I've been introducing CHALLENGE to a number of students. There are now 17 readers, current and former students. Three are now taking extra papers for friends. Almost all have been to a PLP activity in my home and some are participating in a Party study group. Many have agreed to come to May Day and some will invite family and friends. We will invite more of them to the study group after May Day.

It will be a big step for these workers and for PLP when some of them decide to join the Party. They face many difficulties in their lives which makes commitment to the Party a challenge, but we're all noticing greater interest as the imperialists take aim at more workers from the Middle East to Africa to South America to the U.S.

*A comrade*

## Rallies vs. Cuts, War Hit Bible Belt

They're not called demonstrations here in the Bible Belt. They're called rallies. In the nine years I've lived in the South, I've never seen a rally here. But now I've seen three in the last month, two to demand more money for education and the third to protest the war.

Like the rest of the country this area has been hit hard by state budget cuts. One rally, organized by the local NEA (National Education Association) chapter drew 400. The second, organized by Friends of Education Coalition (education officials) had over 500. However, these substantial turnouts received very little publicity. The anti-war demonstration, although the smallest, was the most interesting, organized by a local anti-war group.

People I never thought would be interested in discussing politics are starting to share their viewpoints and sound more like mine than I expected. One co-worker commented that he didn't think the purpose of the education system was really to educate the youth. If it were, he said, then there'd be enough funding, and distributed equally to all districts.

Another co-worker thought the Bush administration lied about why the military invaded Iraq. He pointed out that their reasons kept changing over a short period of time and they were probably hiding the real one — oil. Both these co-workers are now receiving CHALLENGE. And now that we're back from Spring Break, I plan to meet with both of them once a week to discuss the articles in the paper. It's nice to know that even in the Bible Belt, positive change can come out of this crisis.

*Young Red*

## How Many U.S. Lives Did the Soviet Union Save?

*(The following letter was sent to Newsday on March 29, 1995, on the occasion of Clinton's visit to Moscow when Russian veterans of World War II were being honored. The letter was headlined "Salute the Russians.")*

Countless American baby boomers, Clinton perhaps among them, owe their existence to the Red Army.

We are here because our fathers came home in 1945. Who better to call these old men "tovarich" and salute them, perhaps for the last time?

Ask any veteran about the fighting on Omaha Beach, Normandy, the bitter and almost forgotten battles along the German border in the fall of 1944 or the Battle of the Bulge, to say nothing of Salerno or the Rapido in Italy. Then ask him to imagine fighting a German army two to three times larger, a German army not already reeling from two years of defeat in the East.

The Russians, Winston Churchill said, tore the guts out of the German army. Every German soldier they killed, captured or disabled meant one less for our men to fight. Stalingrad was an American victory in which no American fought.

Had the Red Army folded in 1941 or 1942, American soldiers — our fathers — would have had to overcome at least 100 more German divisions. American casualties would have been almost beyond imagination.

We baby boomers are here in our millions because Russian soldiers fought and died in their millions. Because they did, our fathers came home. As we thank our fathers for our freedom, let's also thank the Russians for our fathers — and our lives.

Edward B. Furey, Jr., Woodhaven, Queens, NY

**NEW YORK CITY, April 29 —** Tens of thousands of angry city workers flooded the City Hall area to demonstrate against layoffs and give-backs. The rally was called by AFSCME's District Council 37. These unionized workers were crying out for a fight-back strategy but all they heard were calls to vote out Mayor Bloomberg & Gov Pataki (and replace them with what?). No union leaders mentioned the war on Iraq or used the word strike. Other speakers were loudly cheered when they pointed out that these layoffs and cuts (racist to the core since they affect mainly black, Asian and Latin workers and youth) were occurring at a time when $200 billion were quickly found for an imperialist war.✪

# In Memoriam

## Dennis Long
## 8/20/51 - 2/17/03

**Born to a working-class family with five siblings, Dennis was raised by his widowed mother, his father having passed away at the age of 44. Despite the economic hardship of his early years, Dennis became an industrial worker, union activist, health care worker and teacher. He married as a teenager and fathered a son, Kelly, but soon divorced. A few years later, he married again and fathered a daughter, Corey. His wife, Sandy, died a few years later and Dennis raised Corey alone. After moving to Guatemala to teach in 1995, Dennis married again, to Diana, who gave birth to a daughter, Paola, and a son, Roberto Carlos. Roberto was born six days after Dennis' death.**

**Dennis always felt great compassion for the plight of workers around the world, and was active in many struggles to better their lives. He went to jail many times and lost jobs for fighting against racist groups like the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan when they appeared at rallies in public places. He was outspoken in his opposition to the present world order, believing that working people could make no true lasting progress under capitalism.**

**Because he held these beliefs and acted upon them as a member of the Progressive Labor Party, he was harassed, jailed and fired many times. He finally emigrated to Guatemala to find employment as a teacher.**

**An intelligent, witty speaker, he was popular for his friendly presence and for the integrity with which he lived his life according to his values, Not without contradictions, he battled alcoholism and drug addiction as a young man, but was successful in overcoming both to gain a rich and productive life. He loved music, history, literature, travel, languages and the companionship of acquaintances and friends. He was a kind and loving son, brother and husband, and a devoted father to his children. He is greatly missed by his family, his many friends and his political comrades. His life is an example for those of us left behind to emulate.**

**He was diagnosed with stomach cancer shortly before he died of an apparent heart attack.**

**He is survived by his mother, Denise, his sister Gavina, his brother Robert, his wife Diana, his children Kelly, Corey, Paola and Roberto, seven nieces and nephews, and ten great nieces and nephews.✪**

# RED EYE ON THE NEWS

***BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)***

## Afghans: model for Iraq?

Afghanistan continues to have one of the world's highest rates of maternal mortality, with 1,600 deaths for every 100,000 live births. And what of the legal and political rights of women — the cause so loudly trumpeted by President George W. Bush as he sent U.S. forces to liberate Afghans from the Taliban?

Sima Simar, guest of the president at his 2002 State of the Union Speech, was kicked out of the transitional government. Women are subject to extreme violence. They re mostly unemployed and often confined, still, to their homes….

Civil servants in the cash-starved central government may or may not get paychecks. In some rural areas, schools have been shuttered because there is no money to pay teachers. Children roam the village streets.

Only a quarter of the country's healthcare facilities have electricity….

It is not what…[the U.S.] promised the Afghan people, nor what…[it says it will] bring the Iraqis. (Newsday, 4/1)

NEWS
THE LATEST VIDEO OF SADDAM IS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT IRAQI TELEVISION...
...IS NOTHING MORE THAN A COG IN THE IRAQI LEADER'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE!
WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK WITH MORE COVERAGE OF "OPERATION MISSION FROM GOD: AMERICA'S HEROIC FIGHT TO LIBERATE IRAQ FROM SATAN'S GRASP."

## US pals will rule Iraq

…While the United States has publicly described its roles as promoting a stable, secure environment in Iraq that might be conducive to democracy, administrative officials said they also recognize the need to move more aggressively to promote allies.

"You can't stand back completely," the Pentagon official said. (NYT, 4/26)

## 9/11 is excuse for fascism

Attorney General John Ashcroft has ruled that illegal immigrants who have no known links to terrorist groups can be detained indefinitely to address national security concerns….

Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights sharply criticized the policy shift….

"What it means is that these people will languish in detention without the opportunity to prove to a judge or anyone else that they don't pose a threat to national security." (NYT, 4/26)

## TV: Freedom for the Foxes

The two commentators were gleeful as they skewered the news media and antiwar protesters in Hollywood.

"They are absolutely committing sedition, or treason, one commentator. Michael Savage, said of the protesters one recent night.

MSNBC, the cable news network owned by Microsoft and General Electric….hired the two shortly before the war…..Others in the industry say the moves are the most visible sign of a phenomenon they call "the Fox effect"….

Fox News Channel…has emerged as the most-watched source of cable news by far, with anchors and commentators who skewer the mainstream media…and flay anybody else who questions President Bush's war effort….

Critics worried that Fox's success will push TV news to…."journalism…somehow dampened by a flock of Fox imitators. (NYT, 4/16)

## US hires Saddam's cops

It has become apparent that Washington cannot restore governance to Baghdad without resorting to the party that for decades controlled every aspect of life. It has equally become apparent that the Ba'ath Party, whose neighborhood spy cells were as feared as the state intelligence apparatus will survive….

Two thousand policemen — all card-holding party members — have returned to the streets of Baghdad at the invitation of the US. (GW, 4/30)

## US military girds globe

The United States is planning a long-term military presence in Iraq, in a move that will dramatically extend American power in the region and spread dismay and fear among its opponents across the Arab world.

….The Pentagon intends to retain four military bases in Iraq after the invasion force withdraws….

A permanent US military foothold in Iraq would profoundly change the political make-up of the Middle East. Part of its attraction is that it would offer the US an alternative to Saudi Arabia….

The past two years have seen a rapid expansion of American deployment across thousands of kilometers stretching from the Balkans to the Chinese border and taking in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent….

The US military now girds the globe as no power has done before…. (GW, 4/30)

## Good will can't fix system

In 1988, Ewing M. Kauffman, a civic-minded man who owned the Kansas City Royals and made his fortune in pharmaceuticals, promised a free education to every ninth grader at his alma mater, Westport High, a poor, heavily minority city school….

But was it really a success?....Only 16 percent earned a bachelor's degree and only 6 percent more got a two-year or vocational degree. Over all, 78 percent were unable to convert Mr. Kauffman's offer.

"Mr. Kauffman had no idea how far behind these kids were," said Tom Rhone, the program director….

The…program spent about $6,500 per child. (NYT, 4/23)

## Poor kids get bad start

A study has found that one of every four children in central Harlem has asthma, which…is one of the highest rates ever documented for an American neighborhood.

….About 6 percent of all Americans have asthma….

Previous studies have pointed to rates above 10 percent, and as high as the high teens, in the South Bronx, Harlem and a few other New York City neighborhoods where a long list of environmental factors put people at higher risk….

Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism in the neighborhood. (NYT, 4/19)

# Who Are the Real Looters?

Much has been made of the looting of Iraq's archaeological and ancient civilization treasures. War secretary Rumsfeld dismisses them as crimes that always occur when "freedom" reigns. But the looters were encouraged and protected by U.S. troops, some of whom participated in it, to say nothing of the big-time looters from Washington and Wall St.

The first "item of value" secured by the invading army was the oil fields, to be looted by Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco and BP. While the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad was being sacked, U.S. troops were guarding the Ministry of Oil nearby.

An AsiaTimesOnline reporter went to the Museum on April 11, the day after the looting and was told by Dr. Doni George, a director of the State Board of Antiquities, "The whole administrative compound was completely destroyed and looted…There were people who knew what they wanted. They've taken the precious vase of Uruk, an Akkadian bronze statue from 3,200 B.C. Before they started looting, there were American armored cars outside and people inside. They asked for the American troops to intervene, but they did not…The chairman of the State Board of Antiquities went to the American HQ and explained the situation. But they sent no help. This shows they wanted the Iraqi Museum to be destroyed….

"In the following days, they [the curators] started collecting extremely disturbing evidence that this was a very well-organized operation. Archaeological files and computer disks simply disappeared. Glass-cutting tools were found on the museum's floor…Replicas… [of] the genuine article were still there, but the genuine artworks were stolen. The museum's vaults had been opened with special keys; and armed guards told AsiaTimesOnline that American soldiers…had opened the doors for 'people from other nationalities' to loot. 'The way they opened the locks, no Iraqi could do it.'" When British writer Robert Fisk (The Independent) rushed to U.S. Army HQ in Baghdad to report a huge fire burning at the main Baghdad historical library, he said they did absolutely nothing.

Specialists at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization are convinced that this operation was organized outside Iraq. Citing "wanton and preventable destruction" of Iraq's National Museum of Antiquities, members of the Bush administration's Advisory Committee on Cultural Property have resigned in disgust.

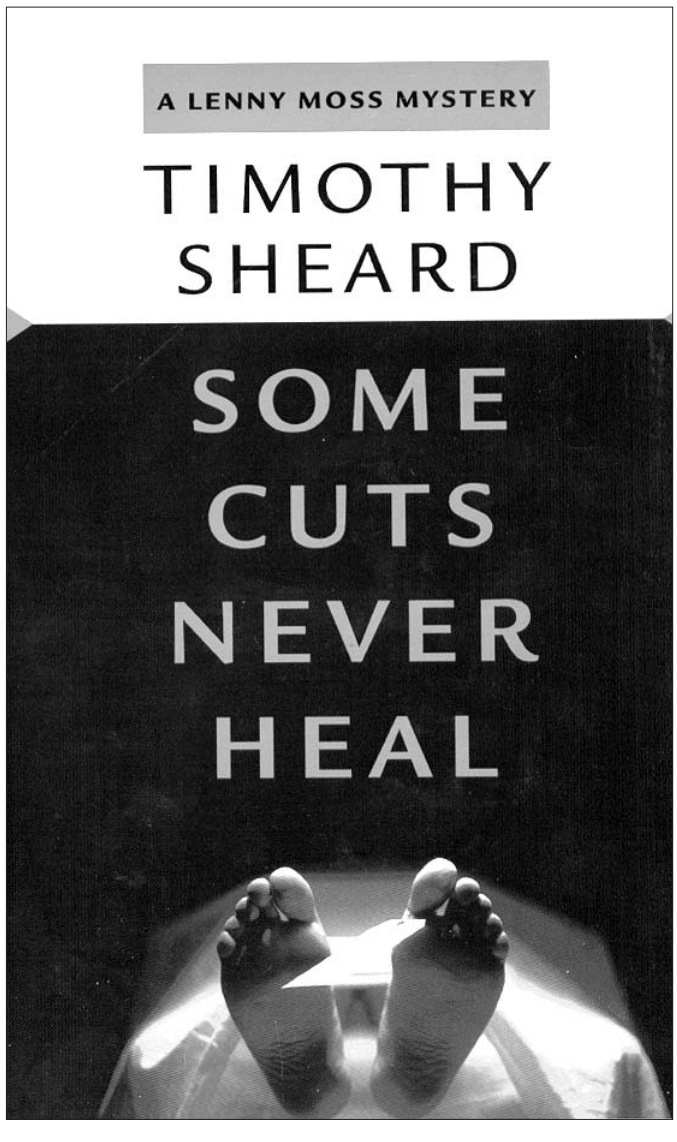
An Associated Press dispatch (4/25) reported that U.S. "military personnel took $13.1 million from huge caches of US currency." Another AP dispatch (4/8) reported that members of the U.S. "Army's 3rd Infantry Division stormed presidential palaces and helped themselves to gold-painted Arab glassware" and other items.

The British Independent reported (4/24) "investigations" were under way of troops who took $600 million in U.S. banknotes. A FoxNews TV engineer was caught at Dulles International Airport smuggling priceless Iraqi paintings and Iraqi monetary bonds, "one of several travelers returning to the U.S. with paintings and even weapons in their luggage."

But these are the small fry looters. The oil companies, Bechtels and Haliburtons, with their billion-dollar contracts socked away even before the invasion, are the big-time looters. And the White House "economic plan" has looted states and cities in the U.S. On July 1, "27 states and the District of Columbia were expected to have an aggregate deficit of $53.5 billion….Much of the cumulative deficit could be erased if the federal government paid the states what it owed to maintain programs that are federal requirements. Four items alone…have cost the states $83 billion." (New York Times, 4/26)

Where is the money going? To a $400 billion Pentagon budget, plus the extra $75 billion Bush got to pay for the initial costs of the invasion of Iraq. Meanwhile states are cutting billions in vital services to workers — Medicare, Medicaid, education, etc. — and laying off tens of thousands of state employees, adding to the climbing unemployment rolls. And the government continues to steal the over $100 billion plus annual surplus taken in by Social Security to pay for its wars, a violation of its own laws. But who's counting? When it comes to looting, no one beats U.S. capitalism.✪

# Mystery and Class Struggle: Lenny Moss Returns




***Book Review: SOME CUTS NEVER HEAL (by Timothy Sheard; published by Carroll and Graf)***

Lenny Moss is the type of shop steward I'd want representing me if I got in hot water with management. He's also a savvy detective. This book combines two great interests of mine: solving mysteries and seeing workers band together to fight for their rights.

The story is set in a large public hospital in Philadelphia where Lenny is a shop steward, a janitor and a detective, in that order. This is Timothy Sheard's second mystery with Lenny Moss as his detective. Although references are made to the first book, you can enjoy this one without having read the other.

An attractive female pharmaceutical representative is found murdered in a vacant room on the ward where Lenny works. Woven in is a realistic story of workers dealing with staff cutbacks, asinine bosses, greedy doctors and a hospital management striving for greater profits and prestige rather than guaranteeing decent patient care.

Lenny does not sugarcoat or romanticize workers. He's fully aware of his own shortcomings, as well as those of his co-workers. What's refreshing is that the workers are not viewed as "deadbeats" or "problems" or "slackers." They have good and bad traits. Lenny looks for the good in his fellow workers and tries to help everyone, not to judge them. Consequently, although "just a janitor," he's respected by many throughout the hospital — nurses, security guards, orderlies and even some doctors.

However, he's feared by management. Why? Because he organizes the workers in a collective way to fight the bosses. Although Lenny is the principal detective, he couldn't solve the murder without many co-workers constantly feeding him needed information, nor without his friends, who save his life twice. The crime solving is a collective effort.

One example of this collectivity occurs when the workers, overcoming many obstacles, try to get time off for a co-worker's funeral during the middle of the day. Lenny first appeals to the Housekeeping Supervisor who threatens to write up everybody if they're late returning from lunch. The head of Security is similarly very nasty. Then he goes to Freely, head of Human Resources, who will only allow an hour maximum. Lenny decides to gather as many workers as possible to meet in the lobby on the day of the funeral and confront Freely. A worker-filled lobby forces the extra time out of Freely for both the service and dinner/discussion afterwards.

With short chapters, the book is very readable, engaging and suspenseful. The hospital conditions dealing with staff shortages, organ transplants, grabbing prestige and headlines over patient care make it very relevant. It's hard putting the book down. I raced through it but hated to see it end. This is no surprise as the author is a 30-year veteran as a critical-care nurse. The hospital scenes ring true. For mystery lovers, this one's a must!✪